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TO: Department of State

FROM USUN - New York DATE 5/30/79

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SUBJECT REPORT BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL THAT REFERS TO THE MASSACRE OF YOUNG CENTRAL AFRICANS

REF

Enclosed is a note from the UN, transmitting a communication at the request of the Permanent Representative of the Central African Empire to the UN, dated May 22, 1979, on the above subject.

YOUNG

Enclosures:
1. note
2. Text of Press Conference

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The enclosed communication, dated 22 May 1979, is transmitted to the permanent missions of the States Members of the United Nations at the request of the Permanent Representative of the Central African Empire to the United Nations.

22 May 1979

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Translated from French

CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE
Unity - Dignity - Labour

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

New York, 22 May 1979

No. 0353/A/ECA/RP
SPK/MCG

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit to you personally, on express instructions from His Majesty Bokassa I, Emperor of Central Africa, the text of the message I received on 19 May 1979 concerning the press conference held by the Central African Sovereign on 17 May 1979 before the ambassadors accredited to Bangui, constituting a refutation of the report of Amnesty International.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this message circulated as an official United Nations document.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Simon-Pierre KIBANDA
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative to
the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Brian E. Urquhart
Under-Secretary-General for
Special Political Affairs
Room 3650 A
United Nations, New York 10017

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TEXT OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE HELD BY HIS MAJESTY BOKASSA I, EMPEROR OF CENTRAL AFRICA, BEFORE THE AMBASSADORS

Mr. Prime Minister,
Personal Counsellors,
Members of the Political Bureau,
Counsellors to the Court,
Members of the Government,
Mr. President of the Supreme Court,
Mr. President of the Economic and Social Council,
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions,
Honourable Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For some time, the Central African Empire has been the target of all the presses of the world which have been echoing the publication of a report by Amnesty International that refers to the massacre of young Central Africans.

Amnesty International announced on Monday, 14 May 1979, that "Probably about 100 Central African schoolchildren ranging in age from 8 to 16 have died after the frightful treatment inflicted upon them by the soldiers of the guard of Emperor Bokassa I, following their arrest on 18 April 1979".

We wish, before the assembly of nations that you represent, to make a formal refutation of these mendacious and grotesque allegations, which were published without prior investigation.

The fact is that on 18, 19 and 20 January 1979, Bangui was shaken by movements of students and pupils who were protesting against the delay in the payment of their school allocations and grants and were therefore refusing to wear the required school uniform. Those claims, whose validity has been recognized by the Government, were satisfied in due time.

In spite of the solutions effected, a tiny fraction of the student population, under remote control, as we have always asserted, kept up the agitation by distributing tracts of a political nature.

In the face of those facts, the Government, desiring to maintain social peace, found it necessary to take steps to guarantee public order. On the basis of investigations conducted by members of the public forces, arrests were made on 18 April 1979. Two days later, the 50 or so students and pupils who had been apprehended - all of whom, we repeat, were over 16 years of age - were released by our order at the time of the popular meeting which we convened and presided over on that day at the headquarters of our sole national party, MESAN, in the presence of the diplomatic corps and the constituted bodies.

Since that time no pupil and no student, whether known to be guilty or not, has been detained either at the central building or at the capital gendarmerie or police stations.

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It should be pointed out that in order to escape police supervision, about 140 students and pupils had gone to the Zairian town of Zongo, situated on the other bank of the Ubangi River, opposite Bangui.

We were informed by the Zairian authorities of the presence of the fugitives at that locality. Moreover, a Zairian document, which is available here to the public, attests, if need be, to the presence of these young people at Zongo.

Having been so informed, the Central African Government, in co-operation with the Zairian authorities, arranged for their return to their families. This was carried out, to the great relief of the weeping families. Is it possible that the temporary absence of these children made people think that they had been massacred?

In our view, this is the only plausible explanation for the allegations made by Amnesty International, and we are therefore justifiably indignant at the way in which that organization has interpreted the situation in the Central African Empire, all the more so because on 23 March 1979 we invited it to send investigators to verify the facts on the scene.

We are prepared at any time to welcome in the Central African Empire a delegation from Amnesty International or from any other humanitarian organization.

We ringingly reaffirm once again the devotion of our country, the Central African Empire, to the sacred principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In reality, the present situation in our country is the result of an extensive campaign of denigration orchestrated by the enemies of the Central African people with the obvious aim of casting discredit upon the Central African Empire and its sovereign, in order to undermine our international prestige, discourage people of goodwill and bring to naught the economic and social efforts of the Central African people.

For that reason we count on the friends of the Central African people, represented here by you, the ambassadors accredited to the Imperial Crown. In this connexion, we should like to be able to count on greater objectivity on your part in evaluating the situation in our country in order to inform your respective Governments about it.

In the name of that objectivity, we pay tribute to the French Government, which, through its Minister for Foreign Affairs, has urged that such serious allegations should be based on investigations.

On the other hand, we regret the hasty judgements of those who have felt compelled to condemn our country on the basis of the totally fantastic allegations of Amnesty International; that organization's principal source of information appears to be the association of Central African students at Paris, who are far from knowing the truth, by reason of their geographical and political position.

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In fact the so-called report of Amnesty International is an exact copy of the tracts disseminated by the student association at Paris, and you will find copies of those tracts in the files you have received. Can anyone, therefore, in all honesty and good conscience, give credence to such inevitably tendentious documents?

In any event, we wish to reaffirm more strongly than ever the unshakable determination of our people to overcome the obstacles which its enemies and detractors have tried to place in its path to national prosperity.

Long live the Empire!

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